United States Department of Agriculture

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News Release

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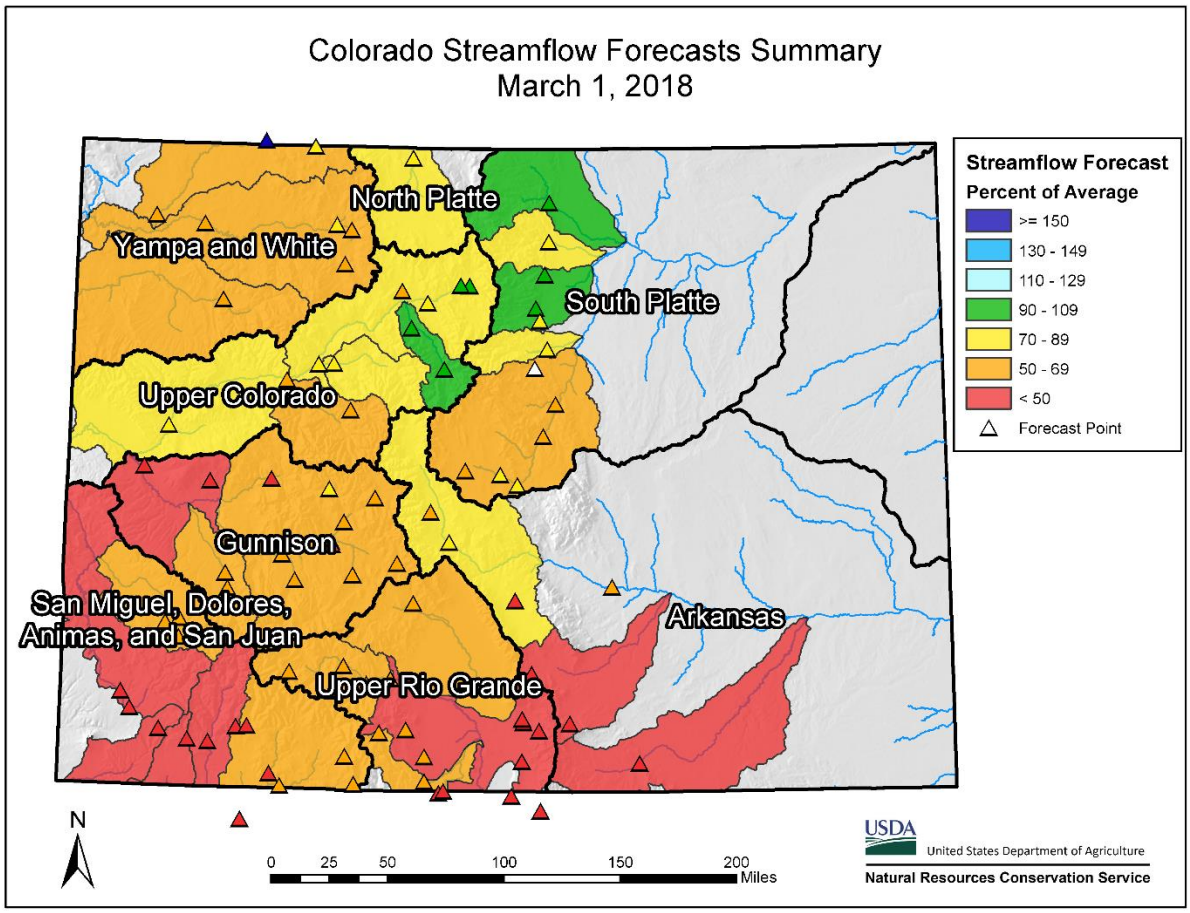
Above Normal February Provides Minimal Improvement

Denver, CO – March 6th, 2018 –Snowfall ramped up across western Colorado for two weeks in the middle of February where in the Rio Grande accumulations added up to a 25 percent improvement in percent of normal, the largest increase in the state. Other watersheds also showed considerable improvement as a result of these same storm systems, such as the combined San Miguel, Dolores, Animas and San Juan basins, the Gunnison, and Yampa & White River basins. Statewide snowpack improved 13 percent to 72 percent of normal, and statewide precipitation, at 109 percent of average, posted the first monthly total above normal for water year 2018 (starting on October 1, 2017). As a whole, February precipitation was above normal for all basins except the Arkansas. "February precipitation was well placed, focusing where it was needed most," said Brian Domonkos, NRCS Colorado Snow Survey Supervisor.



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As snowpack improvements spread across Southern and Western Colorado, little change occurred along the Northern Front Range, both sides of the continental divide. Yet it is in watersheds of the Laramie, Cache la Poudre and Muddy Creek, a tributary of the Colorado River, where snowpacks remain the highest in the state. These basins are at 103, 98 and 98 percent of normal respectively. Other surrounding northern basins maintain elevated snowpack levels compared to the rest of the state. With the higher snowpacks here, streamflow projections continue to hover just below normal between 80 and 100 percent of normal, from the Cache la Poudre River at 96 percent to the Colorado River near Kremmling at 85 percent of normal. On the other end of the spectrum, along both east and west sides of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains forecasts are indicating that spring runoff may yield nearly 30 percent of normal volumes in a number of watersheds. Elsewhere in the state, the majority of streamflows are estimated to provide 50 to 70 percent of normal runoff.

From a snowpack perspective Domonkos comments, "Greater than 200 percent of normal snowfall through the end of April would be necessary to overcome current deficits." A difficult mark to reach through two straight months following some of the driest on record. With little chance of reaching a normal snowpack peak, water managers look to reservoirs to supplement streamflows. It must be remembered that streamflow forecasts predict water runoff and do not include reservoir releases because reservoir management is based on irrigation demands. More information about March 1st snowpack, mountain precipitation, reservoirs levels and streamflow forecasts can be found in the March 1, 2018 Colorado Water Supply Outlook Report.

Colorado's Snowpack and Reservoir Storage as of March 1, 2018

BASIN	% MEDIAN SNOWPACK	% LAST YR.'S SNOWPACK	% AVERAGE RESERVOIR STORAGE	LAST YEAR'S % AVERAGE RESERVOIR STORAGE
GUNNISON	63	41	107	110
COLORADO	81	62	117	107
SOUTH PLATTE	87	63	110	108
NORTH PLATTE	91	70	--	--
YAMPA/WHITE	78	67	125	127
ARKANSAS	64	45	142	103
RIO GRANDE	55	40	121	91
SMDASJ*	53	35	105	114
STATEWIDE	72	52	116	108

*Combined San Miguel, Dolores, Animas and San Juan Basins

For more detailed and the most up to date information about Colorado snowpack and supporting water supply related information, refer to the Colorado Snow Survey website. Or contact Brian Domonkos - Brian.Domonkos@co.usda.gov - 720-544-2852